

In the Claims:

Following is a complete listing of the claims pending in the application, as amended:

1-28. (Canceled)

29-43. (Withdrawn)

44. (Amended) A method in an auction system for bidding on an item being auctioned, the method comprising:
receiving from a user a request to submit a bid for the item;
when the received, the request ~~optionally includes~~ automatic authentication information; automatically authenticating the user based on the received automatic authentication information;
when the user can be automatically authenticated, placing the bid on behalf of the user; and
when the user cannot be automatically authenticated, manually authenticating the user; and
when the user can be manually authenticated, placing the bid on behalf of the user.

45. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 wherein the received request includes automatic authentication information from a cookie stored on a computer of the user.

46. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 wherein automatically authenticating the user based on the received automatic authentication information includes:

extracting a user identifier from the received request; and
determining whether the user identifier identifies a registered user.

47. (Previously Added) The method of claim 46 including determining whether the user identified by the user identifier is authorized to submit bids.

48. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 including determining whether the bid is acceptable before manually authenticating the user.

49. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 including when the user cannot be manually authenticated, registering the user.

50. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 including before receiving from the user a request to submit a bid for the item, sending to the user a display description identifying the item to be auctioned and for requesting to submit a bid at a suggested bid amount for the item.

51. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 including before placing a bid on behalf of the user, sending to the user a display description requesting confirmation to place the bid.

52. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 wherein manual authentication includes sending to the user a display description requesting authentication information, receiving from the user authentication information, and determining whether the user can be authenticated based on the received authentication information.

53. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 wherein after manual authentication of the user, a subsequent bid is place on behalf of the user using semi-automatic authentication.

54. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 wherein the manual authentication expires after a fixed time.

55. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 wherein the manual authentication expires based on when a bid was last placed by the user.

56. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 wherein the manual authentication expires based on when the user last interacted with the auction system.

57. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 wherein the manual authentication expires after a time that is determined based on the user's past interactions with the auction system.

B¹
58. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 wherein the user specifies conditions for expiration of the manual authentication.

59. (Previously Added) The method of claim 44 including before receiving from the user a request to submit a bid for the item, sending to the user a display description identifying the item to be auctioned and for requesting to submit a bid for the item wherein the sent display description does not include a request for manual authentication information.

60-70. (Withdrawn)

71. (Previously Added) A computer-readable medium containing instructions for controlling a computer system to place a bid on an item being auctioned, by a method comprising:

B²
receiving from a user a request to submit a bid for the item;
automatically authenticating the user based on the received request;
when the user cannot be automatically authenticated, manually authenticating the user; and
after authenticating the user, placing the bid on behalf of the user.

72. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 wherein the received request includes automatic authentication information from a cookie stored on a computer of the user.

73. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 wherein automatically authenticating the user based on the received request includes:
extracting a user identifier from the received request; and
determining whether the user identifier identifies a registered user.

B2 74. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 including determining whether the bid is acceptable before manually authenticating the user.

75. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 including when the user is not manually authenticated, registering the user.

76. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 including before receiving from the user a request to submit a bid for the item, sending to the user a display description identifying the item to be auctioned and for requesting to submit a bid at a suggested bid amount for the item.

77. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 including before placing a bid on behalf of the user, requesting from the user confirmation to place the bid.

78. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 wherein manual authentication includes sending to the user a display description requesting authentication information, receiving from the user authentication information, and determining whether the user can be authenticated based on the received authentication information.

79. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 wherein after manual authentication of the user, a subsequent bid is placed on behalf of the user using semi-automatic authentication.

80. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 wherein the manual authentication expires after a fixed period.

81. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 wherein the manual authentication expires based on when a bid was last submitted by the user.

82. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 wherein the manual authentication expires based on when the user last interacted with the auction system.

83. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 wherein the manual authentication expires after a time period that is determined based on the user's past interactions.

84. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 wherein the user specifies conditions for expiration of the manual authentication.

85. (Previously Added) The computer-readable medium of claim 71 including before receiving from the user a request to submit a bid for the item, sending to the user a display description identifying the item to be auctioned and for requesting to submit a bid for the item wherein the sent display description does not include a request for manual authentication information.

122. (New) A method in an auction system for bidding on an item being auctioned, the method comprising:

receiving from a user a request to submit a bid for the item;
when the received request has authentication information, attempting to authenticate the user based on the authentication information, the authentication information of the received request being authentication information that is not entered by the user when the bid is placed;
when the user can be authenticated based on the authentication information of the received request, placing the bid on behalf of the user; and
when the user cannot be authenticated based on authentication information of the received request,
sending a request to the user to provide authentication information;
receiving the authentication information provided by the user as requested;
attempting to authenticate the user based on the authentication information provided by the user; and
when the user can be authenticated based on the authentication information provided by the user, placing the bid on behalf of the user.

123. (New) The method of claim 122 wherein the received request includes authentication information from a cookie stored on a computer of the user.

124. (New) The method of claim 122 wherein the attempting to authenticate the user based on the authentication information of the received request includes:

extracting a user identifier from the received request; and
determining whether the extracted user identifier identifies a registered user.

125. (New) The method of claim 124 including determining whether the user identified by the user identifier is authorized to submit bids.

126. (New) The method of claim 122 including determining whether the bid is acceptable before sending a request to the user to provide authentication information.

127. (New) The method of claim 122 including when the user can not be authenticated based on the authentication information provided by the user, registering the user.

128. (New) The method of claim 122 including before receiving from the user a request to submit a bid for the item, sending to the user a display description identifying the item to be auctioned and for requesting to submit a bid at a suggested bid amount for the item.

129. (New) The method of claim 122 including before placing a bid on behalf of the user, sending to the user a display description requesting confirmation to place the bid.

130. (New) The method of claim 122 wherein when the user can be authenticated based on the authentication information provided by the user, placing a subsequent bid on behalf of the user without the user providing additional authentication information.

131. (New) The method of claim 122 wherein when the user can be authenticated based on the authentication information provided by the user, causing the authentication to expire after a fixed time.

132. (New) The method of claim 122 wherein when the user can be authenticated based on the authentication information provided by the user, causing the authentication to expire based on when a bid was last placed by the user.

133. (New) The method of claim 122 wherein when the user can be authenticated based on the authentication information provided by the user, causing the authentication to expire based on when the user last interacted with the auction system.

134. (New) The method of claim 122 wherein when the user can be authenticated based on the authentication information provided by the user, causing the authentication to expire after a time that is determined based on the user's past interactions with the auction system.

B³
135. (New) The method of claim 122 including before receiving from the user a request to submit a bid for the item, sending to the user a display description identifying the item to be auctioned and for requesting to submit a bid for the item wherein the sent display description does not include a request for authentication information.

136. (New) The method of claim 122 wherein when the user cannot be authenticated based on authentication information of the received request includes when the received request does not include authentication information.

137. (New) The method of claim 136 wherein when the user cannot be authenticated based on authentication information of the received request includes when the attempt to authenticate based on the included authentication information of the received request fails.

138. (New) The method of claim 122 wherein when the user cannot be authenticated based on authentication information of the received request includes when the attempt to authenticate based on the included authentication information of the received request fails.

B³ 139. (New) The method of claim 45 wherein manual authentication includes sending to the user a display description requesting authentication information, receiving from the user authentication information, and determining whether the user can be authenticated based on the received authentication information.